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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #3453 3031330  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 291330Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0147  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0077  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003453

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2028  
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KNNP](#) [PGOV](#) [OVIP](#) [SOCI](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ GROPING FOR LONG-TERM NATIONAL PLAN FOR  
CANCER THERAPY

REF: UNVIE VIENNA 556

Classified By: ECOUNS M. Dodman for reasons 1.4 (b, c).

¶1. (C) Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) officials told EmbOffs on October 23 that while MoST and Ministry of Health (MoH) officials have agreed to try and import new Cobalt-60 (Co-60) sources to meet short-term demands for cancer therapy (reftel), they have as yet not reached a consensus on a long term plan. MoST favors switching to linear accelerators in Iraq's three existing cancer treatment centers but clearly notes the final decision for a long-term treatment strategy belongs to the MoH. Dr. Mohammed Al-Sharaa, Director of the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate, noted that the KRG Health Ministry recently bought three new Co-60 machines. "I do not know how they bought these machines," he added, but said the ministry would likely send a team to assist the KRG in installing and operating the systems. Dr. Al-Sharaa also commented that he is trying to import new Co-60 sources from India or Canada but has thus far not been successful.

¶2. (C) Comment: We encourage continued IAEA assistance to help MoH and MoST clearly define Iraq's long term cancer therapy strategy and formulate a corresponding project package for donors. It is highly unlikely that any future USAID health program in Iraq will include nuclear applications for cancer therapy as a priority element. While we remain open to training events and exchanges with the MoH to improve their planning and budgeting ability as well as cancer therapy techniques, we should not offer further financial assistance to purchase medical equipment. Iraqi claims notwithstanding (reftel), Iraqi medical personnel have the expertise to install new Co-60 sources in their cancer therapy machines. End comment.  
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